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Sustainable development: combating sand and dust storms

Report of the Second Committee*

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I. Introduction

1. The Second Committee held a substantive debate on agenda item 20 (see A/73/538, para. 2). Action on sub-item (j) was taken at the 23rd and 25th meetings, on 8 and 28 November 2018. An account of the Committee's consideration of the sub-item is contained in the relevant summary records.[1]

II. Consideration of draft resolutions A/C.2/73/L.16 and A/C.2/73/L.45

2. At the 23rd meeting, on 8 November, the representative of Egypt, on behalf of the States Members of the United Nations that are members of the Group of 77 and China, introduced a draft resolution entitled "Combating sand and dust storms" (A/C.2/73/L.16).

3. At its 25th meeting, on 28 November, the Committee had before it a draft resolution entitled "Combating sand and dust storms" (A/C.2/73/L.45), submitted by the Vice-Chair of the Committee, Mehdi Remaoun (Algeria), on the basis of informal consultations held on draft resolution A/C.2/73/L.16.

4. At the same meeting, the Committee was informed that draft resolution A/C.2/73/L.45 had no programme budget implications.

5. Also at the same meeting, the Committee adopted draft resolution A/C.2/73/L.45 (see para. 7).

6. In the light of the adoption of draft resolution A/C.2/73/L.45, draft resolution A/C.2/73/L.16 was withdrawn by its sponsors.

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[1] A/C.2/73/SR.23 and A/C.2/73/SR.25.

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III. Recommendation of the Second Committee

7. The Second Committee recommends to the General Assembly the adoption of the following draft resolution:

Combating sand and dust storms

The General Assembly,

Recalling its resolutions 70/195 of 22 December 2015, 71/219 of 21 December 2016 and 72/225 of 20 December 2017 on combating sand and dust storms,

Reaffirming its resolution 70/1 of 25 September 2015, entitled "Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development", in which it adopted a comprehensive, far-reaching and people-centred set of universal and transformative Sustainable Development Goals and targets, its commitment to working tirelessly for the full implementation of the Agenda by 2030, its recognition that eradicating poverty in all its forms and dimensions, including extreme poverty, is the greatest global challenge and an indispensable requirement for sustainable development, its commitment to achieving sustainable development in its three dimensions — economic, social and environmental — in a balanced and integrated manner, and to building upon the achievements of the Millennium Development Goals and seeking to address their unfinished business,

Reaffirming also its resolution 69/313 of 27 July 2015 on the Addis Ababa Action Agenda of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development, which is an integral part of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, supports and complements it, helps to contextualize its means of implementation targets with concrete policies and actions, and reaffirms the strong political commitment to address the challenge of financing and creating an enabling environment at all levels for sustainable development in the spirit of global partnership and solidarity,

Reaffirming further the Paris Agreement,[1] and encouraging all its parties to fully implement the Agreement, and parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change[2] that have not yet done so to deposit their instruments of ratification, acceptance, approval or accession, where appropriate, as soon as possible,

Highlighting the synergies between the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Paris Agreement, and noting with concern the scientific findings contained in the special report entitled *Global Warming of 1.5°C* of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change,

Looking forward to the climate change summit to be convened by the Secretary-General in 2019 to accelerate global action on climate change,

Recalling United Nations Environment Assembly resolutions 1/7 of 27 June 2014 on strengthening the role of the United Nations Environment Programme in promoting air quality[3] and 2/21 of 27 May 2016 on sand and dust storms,[4]

Recalling also the outcomes of the thirteenth session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in Those

[1] Adopted under the UNFCCC in FCCC/CP/2015/10/Add.1, decision 1/CP.21.

[2] United Nations, Treaty Series, vol. 1771, No. 30822.

[3] See *Official Records of the General Assembly, Sixty-ninth Session, Supplement No. 25* (A/69/25), annex.

[4] Ibid., *Seventy-first Session, Supplement No. 25* (A/71/25), annex.

Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, Particularly in Africa, held in Ordos, China, from 6 to 16 September 2017, including decision 31/COP.13 of 15 September 2017 on the Policy Advocacy Framework to combat Sand and Dust Storms,[5]

Noting the adoption, by the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific at its seventy-second session, of resolution 72/7 of 19 May 2016 on regional cooperation to combat sand and dust storms in Asia and the Pacific,

Recalling its resolution 66/288 of 27 July 2012, in which it endorsed the outcome document of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, entitled "The future we want",

Recalling also its resolutions 71/229 of 21 December 2016 and 72/220 of 20 December 2017 on the implementation of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in Those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, Particularly in Africa,

Taking note of the Regional Programme to Combat Sand and Dust Storms of the United Nations Environment Programme, and taking note also of other initiatives, including the ministerial meeting on sand and dust storms held in Nairobi on 21 February 2013 on the margins of the twenty-seventh session of the Governing Council/Global Ministerial Environment Forum of the United Nations Environment Programme,

Recalling the Sendai Declaration and the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030, adopted at the Third United Nations World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction and endorsed by the General Assembly in its resolution 69/283 of 3 June 2015, and recognizing that one of the priorities for action of the Framework is an understanding of disaster risk for prevention and mitigation and for the development and implementation of appropriate preparedness and effective response to disasters, which continue to undermine efforts to achieve sustainable development,

Acknowledging that, based on the notion of hazards as defined in the Hyogo Framework for Action 2005–2015: Building the Resilience of Nations and Communities to Disasters,[6] addressing multidimensional hazards, including those posed by sand and dust storms, contributes towards the achievement of the goals, targets and priorities for action set out in the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030,

Emphasizing the relevance of the efforts and cooperation of Member States at the regional and international levels to control and reduce the negative impacts of sand and dust storms on human settlements in vulnerable regions, taking note of the initiative of the Islamic Republic of Iran in hosting a regional meeting of environment ministers in Tehran on 29 September 2010, welcoming the holding of other meetings with the active participation of all countries, and taking note with appreciation of other ongoing initiatives by various countries to combat sand and dust storms, especially at the regional level,

Stressing the need for cooperation at the global and regional levels with a view to managing and mitigating the effects of sand and dust storms through the enhancement of early warning systems and the sharing of climate and weather information to forecast sand and dust storms, and affirming that resilient action to combat sand and dust storms requires a better understanding of the severe multidimensional impacts of sand and dust storms, including the deterioration of the

[5] See ICCD/COP(13)/21/Add.1.

[6] A/CONF.206/6 and A/CONF.206/6/Corr.1, chap. I, resolution 2.

health, well-being and livelihood of people, increased desertification and land degradation, deforestation, loss of biodiversity and land productivity, and their impact on sustainable economic growth,

1. *Takes note* of the report of the Secretary-General;[7]

2. *Recognizes* that sand and dust storms and the unsustainable land management practices, among other factors, that can cause or exacerbate these phenomena, including climate change, pose a serious challenge to the sustainable development of affected countries and regions, also recognizes that, in the past few years, sand and dust storms have inflicted substantial economic, social and environmental damage on the inhabitants of the world's arid, semi-arid and dry subhumid areas, especially in Africa and Asia, and underscores the need to treat them and to promptly take measures to address those challenges;

3. *Welcomes* the convening of a high-level interactive dialogue on sand and dust storms, held at Headquarters in New York on 16 July 2018, bringing together Member States, United Nations entities, regional commissions and other stakeholders to discuss action-oriented recommendations and address the challenges faced by the affected countries, including ways to improve policy coordination at the global level to tackle those challenges in the context of the Sustainable Development Goals, during which the continuing need to confront the multiple challenges presented by sand and dust storms was highlighted;

4. *Acknowledges* the role of the United Nations development system in advancing international cooperation and support to combat sand and dust storms, and invites all relevant bodies, agencies, funds and programmes of the United Nations system, including the United Nations Environment Programme, the United Nations Development Programme, the United Nations Forum on Forests, the World Meteorological Organization, the World Health Organization, the secretariat of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in Those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, Particularly in Africa, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations and all other related organizations to integrate, in their respective cooperation frameworks, operational programmes, measures and actions aimed at combating sand and dust storms so as to address this problem and contribute to the enhancement of, inter alia, capacity-building at the national level, the implementation of regional and subregional projects, the sharing of information, best practices and experiences and the boosting of technical cooperation in the affected countries and countries of origin, to improve the implementation of sustainable land management practices, to take measures to prevent and control the main factors of sand and dust storms and to improve the development of early warning systems as tools to combat sand and dust storms in accordance with their strategic plans;

5. *Welcomes* the intention of the Executive Director of the United Nations Environment Programme to establish an inter-agency network involving relevant entities of the United Nations system, within their respective mandates and existing resources, with the aim of enhancing United Nations system-wide cooperation and coordination on the sand and dust storms agenda, and encourages all relevant agencies to continue to work closely to support the network and to ensure a more coherent and consistent approach to tackling sand and dust storm issues at the global, regional and national levels, as appropriate;

[7] A/73/306.

6. *Recognizes* the importance of new and innovative technologies and best practices in combating sand and dust storms, as well as their sharing and transfer on mutually agreed terms;

7. *Encourages* regional, subregional and interregional organizations and processes to continue to share best practices, experiences and technical expertise in combating sand and dust storms to address the root causes and impacts of sand and dust storms, including through improved implementation of sustainable land management practices, and to promote regional cooperation in this matter to reduce the risks and impact of future sand and dust storms and to provide affected countries with capacity-building and technical support from the relevant United Nations organizations, such as the World Meteorological Organization, the United Nations Environment Programme and the World Health Organization, within their respective mandates, to this end;

8. *Invites* all affected Member States as well as relevant entities of the United Nations development system, regional organizations and other relevant stakeholders to endeavour to meet the objectives set out in the present resolution;

9. *Reaffirms* that climate change is one of the greatest challenges of our time and, among other factors, is a serious challenge to the sustainable development of all countries, including those affected by sand and dust storms, and emphasizes that, among other factors, climate change is an important potential contributor to future wind erosion and the risk of sand and dust storms, especially the occurrence of more extreme wind events and the movement towards drier climates, although reverse effects are possible;

10. *Recognizes* that sand and dust storms cause numerous human health problems in different regions around the world, especially in arid and semi-arid regions, and that there is a need to reinforce protective strategies to reduce the negative impacts of sand and dust storms on human health, invites the World Health Organization, with the cooperation of other relevant United Nations entities, as appropriate, to support affected countries in combating health problems caused by sand and dust storms, within their respective mandates, welcomes the formation of a working group on sand and dust storms to discuss emerging issues and share information under the Global Platform on Air Quality and Health of the World Health Organization, and also welcomes the finalization of a report on the health effects of sand and dust storms as part of the current update to the World Health Organization air quality guidelines, and the development of standard operating procedures to assess and address the short-term health effects of desert dust by the World Health Organization, in collaboration with experts from the World Meteorological Organization;

11. *Emphasizes* that sand and dust storm issues will constitute important components of the global coalition on health, environment and climate change launched in May 2018 by the World Health Organization, the United Nations Environment Programme and the World Meteorological Organization to improve coordination and reduce the 12.6 million deaths each year that are attributed to environmental risks, especially air pollution;

12. *Commends* the United Nations Environment Assembly on its commitment to addressing sand and dust storms, and in this regard notes Environment Assembly resolution 2/21 on sand and dust storms, adopted during its second session;[4]

13. *Notes* the convening of the third session of the United Nations Environment Assembly in Nairobi from 4 to 6 December 2017, under the theme "Towards a pollution-free planet", affirms the importance of addressing sand and dust

storms in the context of international efforts against air pollution, and takes note with appreciation of its ministerial declaration;[8]

14. *Welcomes* the thirteenth session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification, held in Ordos, China, from 6 to 16 September 2017, notes with appreciation the Ordos Declaration[9] and other relevant outcomes adopted by the parties during the Conference, namely decision 31/COP.13,[5] invites the organizations of the United Nation system to support their implementation, and reaffirms the importance of addressing sand and dust storms under the Convention;

15. *Encourages* the relevant entities of the United Nations, including the World Health Organization, the United Nations Environment Programme, the United Nations Development Programme, the World Meteorological Organization, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations and the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the Secretariat, and donors to provide capacity-building and technical assistance for combating sand and dust storms and to support the implementation of the national, regional and global action plans of the affected countries;

16. *Acknowledges* the global assessment of sand and dust storms prepared by the United Nations Environment Programme in collaboration with other relevant United Nations entities, including the World Meteorological Organization and the secretariat of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification, which sets out proposals for consolidated and coordinated technical and policy options for responding to sand and dust storms;

17. *Requests* the Secretary-General to submit to the General Assembly at its seventy-fourth session a report on the implementation of the present resolution, and decides to include in the provisional agenda of its seventy-fourth session, under the item entitled "Sustainable development", the sub-item entitled "Combating sand and dust storms", unless otherwise agreed.

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[8] UNEP/EA.3/HLS.1.

[9] ICCD/COP(13)/21/Add.1, decision 27/COP.13, annex.